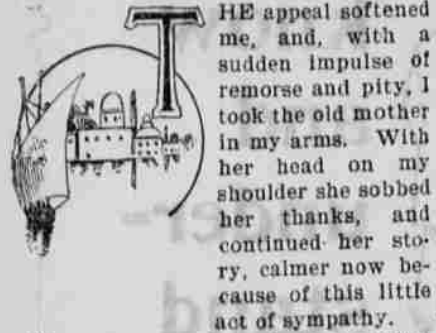


AN ISLAND PEARL.

BY B. L. FARJEON.

INTERNATIONAL PRESS ASSOCIATION.

CHAPTER XII.



"Amos, my son, I was in the hospital for more than a year, and most of that time I was like a woman in a dream. I was told that for months I didn't know a soul about me, and it was never expected I should rise from my bed. But the Lord was good to me, and I got well slowly—oh, so slowly, Amos! For a long time I could not remember what had taken place, but little by little it came back to me. Then I was told that when I was taken to the hospital they did not know who I was, and that there was nothing in my pocket by which they could have found out my name. They suspected, they said, that I had sailors for my relations, for I talked a great deal about the sea; but that was all they could discover. No one came to see me all the time I was in the hospital, and when I was strong enough they let me go home. When I got back to the cottage I found a neighbor living in it, who thought that I was dead, as I believed you to be before to-night, my dear son. The neighbors had heard nothing of the accident, and they all believed me to be dead; and they came about me, now that I was risen from the grave, as it might be, and those who were hardest upon me before made it up to me in kindness. Then I heard that I had lost my son—that the ship he was in had foundered, and that not a soul in her had been saved. I heard more, my son—shall I tell it?"

"Tell it," I said, steeling my voice. "Don't blame me, Amos, and bear it like a brave man, for my sake, dear. I asked after Mabel, and the first thing I heard was that she had a baby. 'Go and bring her,' I said to the neighbors who were about me—'go and bring her, and my son's child to me. Tell her I am living, and am yearning to embrace them both.' They looked at one another, and gradually the story came out. Shortly after the news of the loss of the Blue Jacket with all hands reached the neighborhood, Mabel and her mother went away."

"Where to? Where is my wife and child?"

"They left England altogether, for Australia; and since then nothing has been heard of them."

Consternation at this startling news struck me dumb for a time, and my mother was too frightened to break the silence. This night, which in my eager anticipation was to have been filled with joy had brought desolation and despair to my heart.

"Have you anything more to say?" I asked faintly, when I could muster strength to speak. I had to repeat the question before my mother replied, and then the words fell like drops of poison from her lips.

"Amos, Mabel did not go alone." "You have already told me so. Her mother and my child were with her. My child!" I stretched forth my arms in an agony of disappointment.

"Some one else was with her, my son."

"Who?"

"Mr. Druce, your enemy."

I shook her from me roughly, and stood upon the threshold of the room. The snow floated in, but I did not heed it. I heard my mother's step behind me.

"Stop where you are!" I cried, fiercely. "Don't approach closer to me, nor look into my face! You have hardened my heart toward you. It is for me to speak now, and for you to listen. You believe that my wife is unfaithful to me. You, my mother, have said so to me—to my face. It is a lie! Do you hear me? It is a lie!"

My vehemence shook her to the soul. "You made me speak," she faltered, "as though I were on my death-bed. I have obeyed you, my son—I have obeyed you. Oh, Amos, my heart is breaking!"

"And mine is filled with joy and happiness at what you have told me," I retorted. "A loving mother who has proved herself to me on this bitter Christmas night!"

"Amos, Amos!" she cried, in an agony of grief. "It is not my fault. I know what you must suffer. I would not dare to tell you what the neighbors said of her—"

"You would not dare," I said, "for I should not stop to hear. It needs no telling; you yourself have made me acquainted with the slanders their false tongues spoke respecting me. Well, you knew them to be liars, but you were willing enough to listen to them afterward, when their time was changed. But what does it matter what a lot of gossiping, tittle-tattling women say about a man? He is strong to bear it, and can laugh at them for their pains. And you! well, you could defend me in my absence, but you could find no word in defense of her who is dearer to me than my life—than a hundred lives, if I had them! You hate her from the moment I spoke to you of my love for her. Why did you do so? You threw doubts then upon her goodness, as you have thrown doubts this night upon her purity. If you had done what you should

have done when Mabel returned home, if you had gone boldly into her house and spoken to her plainly, all this misery, all this torture, might have been avoided. But you had condemned her in your heart from the first, and were only too willing to believe all the bad things that were said of her. You, a woman who, for my sake, if not for her own, should have defended her, a young and inexperienced girl, from the malicious tongues of slanderers and liars, who were striking at my life and my happiness, sided with them against her, and had no word to speak in her defense.

"What could have been in Mabel's mind on that happy Christmas night, three years ago, to cause her to win from me a sacred pledge of trustfulness in her faith and love, I cannot with certainty say; but some shadow of fear was upon her. Perhaps she suspected you were not her friend; perhaps, with the knowledge that her own mother was against me, she dreaded that circumstances might occur in my absence to cause a breach between us, and she wished to strengthen both herself and me. Anyway, she drew the pledge from me, and she gave me hers, and I believe in her faithfulness with all my soul. 'The harder task of faithfulness is yours,' she said, as she kissed me; and she told me that while I was absent from her she would have three tallsmans with her—hope, faith and love. 'I should never doubt,' she said. 'My love for you and faith in you have become a part of my life.' Listen now to the words I spoke to her; they are graven on my heart: 'Henceforth this good season holds a more sacred place in my heart because it has brought me the priceless blessing of your love; because, also, of the lesson it has taught me, the lesson of faith, to live forever undimmed in my soul.' Well, whispering these words to her from my heart of hearts, shall I, on this anniversary of that happy night, bitter as it is to me, prove them, even by the shadow of suspicion, to be false? No, henceforth I have but one task before me. When that is done, and not till then, you and I, mother, shall meet again."

"What are you going to do, Amos?" "I am going to act toward my wife and child as my father, Amos Beecroft, would have acted toward you and yours had you been slandered in his absence as my wife has been in mine. I will never put foot inside this cottage again until I find her; and when she is before you, and you are face to face, you shall ask her pardon, for the wrong you have done her."

"I ask her pardon now!" sobbed my mother. "I have been weak and wrong—I see it! I ought to have done as you said. No, no, Amos, do not leave me without a word of pity and forgiveness! As I kneel to you I will kneel to her, my son!" Her tears choked her utterance.

"God forgive you for what you have done!" I answered, not looking at the prostrate form at my feet, "and send comfort to us both. I go away tonight a crushed and desolate man, and there will henceforth be no light in my life till I have found my wife and child!"

Thus in the blindness of my grief I spoke, throwing, in my unreason, all the blame upon my old mother; and as I stepped out into the cold and wintry night, her mournful cry, "Oh, Amos, my son!" crept after me like a wailing wind. I knew that a ship was lying at Gravesend ready to sail for Australia, and for that I was bent. I trudged doggedly through the snow, halting but once, outside a house in which, notwithstanding the lateness of the night, merry-making was going on. What caused me to pause was a woman's voice singing the very song my wife had sung on our wedding night:

"Though friends be chiding,
And waves dividing,
In faith abiding,
I'll still be true;
And I'll pray for thee,
On the stormy ocean,
In deep devotion,
That's what I'll do."

The hot tears this reminiscence forced from me relieved me somewhat; but a gnawing pain was at my heart as I repeated the words "In faith abiding I'll still be true." The tone in which my mother had informed me that Mabel did not go away alone had haunted me from the moment the words were spoken, and I strove in vain to deaden the poisonous thoughts they engendered. The two themes, "In faith abiding, I'll still be true," and "Mr. Druce, your enemy, is with Mabel," came alternately to my mind, mocking each other and adding to my misery.

In two days I was again on the sea, on my way to Australia.

CHAPTER XIII.

TIRING scenes are now before me scenes which are woven in the history of my life, and which will lead me naturally to the end. But before they commence there is a blank, so far as concerns the proper business of my story.

A blank of six or seven years. I

have lost count of time; and to this day, although I have been tenderly and playfully assisted by one who is very, very dear to me, I cannot fix the exact number of years I was at the other end of the world. Being there, I had but one object before me, and in pursuance of it I traveled thousands of miles on foot. Wherever I heard of a woman and child who in any way resembled the description of those I was in search of, thither I directed my steps. This will not appear so strange to you who have not traveled in those regions, when I tell you that on the gold-diggings at that time there were fifty men to one woman; therefore, a woman could be more easily tracked than in a big city. Neither weather nor distance deterred me. I traveled through flood, and literally through fire; for I was in the Black Forest on that awful black Thursday when scores of miles of silver and iron bark trees were blazing fiercely. You may walk through the forest on this day, and follow the track of that terrible fire. Many a false track did I follow, only to be disappointed, after miles of weary wandering. Over and over again I was in Forest Creek, Tarragower, Bendigo and Ballarat. In the last place I was a witness of the terrible riots, and took part in them, being compelled to do so to save my life. I went to every new rush—to Maryborough, Din-dilly, Avoca—but never found those I was in search of. One time I followed a woman and child for six months, losing them whenever I reached the place I was bound for, and following them on to the next, where I lost them again.

I could fill a volume with my adventures during this time; but the telling of them would not forward my story. I must here record a certain change of feeling which came over me at about the expiration of a couple of years. The desire to find my wife became weakened; the desire to find my child became more and more intense. Soon I thought almost entirely of my child, and I pictured him in my imagination as growing up year after year, with fair hair and blue eyes, and with features resembling those of my father, Beecroft, Mariner. This change of feeling led to another impression as the years went by. I got it into my head that my wife might have died, but that my boy was certainly alive. Curiously enough, instead of becoming disheartened by my want of success, I never once lost my conviction that the day would come when I should hold him in my arms.

I had to work for my living, as you may guess, and I was generally fortunate in finding more gold than my necessities required. I was sober and steady; and I take some credit to myself that I was not wrecked, as hundreds of better men than I were, in sly grog-shops and public houses. Drink was the ruin of many a fair life on the gold-diggings and in the cities; but there was no temptation in it for me, and I escaped. I did not escape another temptation. I was bitten by the gold fever, and I had my dreams of finding a big nugget of gold, and the day afterward of finding those I was in search of, and then all of us going home and living happily together. I dreamed that dream often, and always regretted the waking up. One thing I pushed resolutely from my mind, and would not think of—that was, what I should do if I met Mr. Druce. When it got into my head unawares, I brooded over it until I came to myself, when I thrust it from me in fear, for there was always a mist of blood in my eyes as his image came before me.

CAUGHT THE WHALE.

Three Hours of Hard Fighting Brought Victory to the Fishermen.

"There she blows!" That was the cry heard through Amagansett, L. I., a few mornings ago. The signal flag of red was run up and was quickly responded to by the crews belonging to the whaling boats along the shore between East Hampton and Amagansett, says the New York Journal. Lately whales have appeared in this vicinity, and numerous attempts have been made to catch one, but without success. Two were again sighted that morning opposite Amagansett and five boats were soon in hot pursuit. The whales were about one and a half miles off shore. After an exciting chase until noon one of the captains got close enough to the largest whale to harpoon him. He was opposite Napeague life-saving station when struck and the men soon had three lines attached to him. Then began an exciting battle between the men and the sea monster. Time and again the whale attempted to carry the men out on the ocean, and repeatedly the whalers would stab him with the harpoon. It was dangerous sport, and to the onlookers from the beach it seemed as though the boats would be wrecked every time the whale rose to the surface. He made savage lunges with his tail, lashing the water to a foam and spouting to a great height. After three hours' hard fighting the whale showed signs of weakening and began to spout blood in the air. At 4:30 o'clock the crew succeeded in landing the whale on the beach. He measured forty-five feet and will probably make forty barrels of oil. The captors expect to realize a very large sum for him. The unusual sight drew crowds to the beach from neighboring villages and the hotels and livery stables made preparations for a grand rush of visitors the next day.

Moonshiners in Peace.

An unusual report came from Etowah county, Alabama, when the records of the United States marshal of that district for 1896 were made up. It appeared that not a moonshiner had been disturbed there during the year.

TALMAGE'S SERMON.

"THE FIRST WOMAN" LAST SUNDAY'S SUBJECT.

"And When the Woman Saw that the Tree Was Good for Food and Designed to Make One Wise, She Took of the Fruit Thereof—Gen. 3:6."



IT IS the first Saturday afternoon in the world's existence. Ever since sunrise Adam has been watching the brilliant pageantry of wings and scales and clouds, and in his first lessons in zoology and ornithology and ichthyology he has noticed that the robins fly the air in twos, and that the fish swim the water in twos, and that the lions walk the fields in twos, and in the warm recollection of that Saturday afternoon he falls off into slumber; and as if by allegory to teach all ages that the greatest of earthly blessings is sound sleep, this paradisaical somnolence ends with the discovery on the part of Adam of a corresponding intelligence just landed on a new planet. Of the mother of all the living I speak—Eve, the first, the fairest, and the best.

I make me a garden. I inlay the paths with mountain moss, and I border them with pearls from Ceylon and diamonds from Golconda. Here and there are fountains tossing in the sunlight and ponds that ripple under the paddling of the swans. I gather me lilies from the Amazon, and orange groves from the tropics, and tamarinds from Goyaz. There are woodbine and honeysuckle climbing over the wall, and starred spaniels sprawling themselves on the grass. I invite amid these trees the larks, and the brown thrushes and the robins, and all the brightest birds of heaven, and they stir the air with infinite chirp and carol. And yet the place is a desert filled with darkness and death as compared with the residence of the woman of my text, the subject of my story. Never since have such skies looked down through such leaves into such waters! Never has river wave had such curve and sheen and bank as adorned the Pison, the Havilah, the Gihon, and the Hiddekel, even the pebbles being beddellum and onyx stone! What fruits, with no curculio to sting the rind! What flowers, with no slug to gnaw the root! What atmosphere, with no frost to chill and with no heat to consume! Bright colors tangled in the grass. Perfume in the air. Music in the sky. Great scene of gladness and love and joy.

Right there under a bower of leaf and vine and shrub occurred the first marriage. Adam took the hand of this immaculate daughter of God and pronounced the ceremony when he said: "Bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." A forbidden tree stood in the midst of that exquisite park. Eve sauntering out one day alone looks up at the tree and sees the beautiful fruit, and wonders if it is sweet, and wonders if it is sour, and standing there, says: "I think I will just put my hand upon the fruit; it will do no damage to the tree; I will not take the fruit to eat, but I will just take it down to examine it." She examined the fruit. She said: "I do not think there can be any harm in my just breaking the rind of it." She put the fruit to her teeth, she tasted, she allowed Adam also to taste the fruit, the door of the world opened, and the monster Sin entered. Let the heavens gather blackness, and the winds sigh on the bosom of the hills, and cavern, and desert, and earth, and sky join in one long, deep, hell-rending howl—"The world is lost!"

Beasts that before were harmless and full of play put forth claw, and sting, and tooth, and tusk. Birds whet their beak for prey. Clouds troop in the sky. Sharp thorns shoot up through the soft grass. Blasts on the leaves. All the chords of that great harmony are snapped. Upon the brightest home this world ever saw our first parents turned their back and led forth on a path of sorrow the broken-hearted myriads of a ruined race.

Do you not see, in the first place, the danger of a poorly regulated inquisitiveness? She wanted to know how the fruit tasted. She found out, but six thousand years have deplored that unhealthful curiosity. Healthful curiosity has done a great deal for letters, for art, for science, and for religion. It has gone down into the depths of the earth with the geologist and seen the first chapter of Genesis written in the book of nature illustrated with engraving on rock, and it stood with the antiquarian while he blew the trumpet of resurrection over buried Herculaneum and Pompeii, until from their sepulchre there came up shaft and terrace and amphitheater. Healthful curiosity has enlarged the telescopic vision of the astronomer until worlds hidden in the distant heavens have trooped forth and have joined the choir praising the Lord. Planet weighed against planet and wildest comet lassoed with resplendent law. Healthful curiosity has gone down and found the tracks of the eternal God in the polypt and the starfish under the sea and the majesty of the great Jehovah encamped under the gorgeous curtains of the dahlia. It has studied the spots on the sun, and the larva in a beach leaf, and the light under a fire-fly's wing, and the terrible eye-glance of a condor pitching from Chimborazo. It has studied the myriads of animalcules that make up the phosphorescence in a ship's wake, and the mighty maze of suns, and spheres, and constellations, and galaxies that blaze on in the march of God. Healthful cu-

riosity has stood by the inventor until forces that were hidden for ages came to wheels, and levers, and shafts and shuttles—forces that fly the air, or swim the sea, or cleave the mountain, until the earth jars, and roars, and rings, and crackles, and booms with strange mechanism, and ships with nostrils of hot steam and yokes of fire, draw the continents together.

I say nothing against healthful curiosity. May it have other Leyden jars, and other electric batteries, and other voltaic piles, and other magnifying-glasses, with which to storm the barred castles of the natural world until it shall surrender its last secret. We thank God for the geological curiosity of Professor Hitchcock, and the mechanical curiosity of Liebig, and the zoological curiosity of Cuvier, and the inventive curiosity of Edison; but we must admit that unhealthful and irregular inquisitiveness has rushed thousands and tens of thousands into ruin.

Eve just tasted the fruit. She was curious to find out how it tasted, and that curiosity blasted her and blasted all nations. So there are clergymen in this day inspired by unhealthful inquisitiveness who have tried to look through the keyhole of God's mysteries—mysteries that were barred and bolted from all human inspection, and they have wrenched their whole moral nature out of joint by trying to pluck fruit from branches beyond their reach or have come out on limbs of the tree from which they have tumbled into ruin without remedy. A thousand trees of religious knowledge from which we may eat and get advantage; but from certain trees of mystery how many have plucked their ruin! Election, free agency, trinity, resurrection—in the discussion of these subjects hundreds and thousands of people ruin the soul. There are men who actually have been kept out of the kingdom of heaven because they could not understand who Melchisedec was not!

Oh, how many have been destroyed by an unhealthful inquisitiveness! It is seen in all directions. There are those who stand with the eye-stare and mouth-gape of curiosity. They are the first to hear a falsehood, build it another story high and two wings to it. About other people's apparel, about other people's business, about other people's financial condition, about other people's affairs, they are over-anxious. Every nice piece of gossip sits at their door, and they fatten and luxuriate in the endless round of the great world of tittle-tattle. They invite and sumptuously entertain at their house Colonel Twaddle and Esquire Chitchat and Governor Smalltalk. Whoever hath an innuendo, whoever hath a scandal, whoever hath a valuable secret, let him come and sacrifice it to this Goddess of Splutter. Thousands of Adams and Eves do nothing but eat fruit that does not belong to them. Men quite well known as mathematicians falling in this computation of moral algebra: good sense plus good breeding, minus curiosity, equals minding your own affairs!

Observe also in this subject how repelling sin is when appended to great attractiveness. Since Eve's death there has been no such perfection of womanhood. You could not suggest an attractiveness to the body or suggest any refinement to the manner. You could add no gracefulness to the gait, no lustre to the eye, no sweetness to the voice. A perfect God made her a perfect woman, to be the companion of a man in a perfect home, and her entire nature vibrated in accord with the beauty and song of Paradise. But she rebelled against God's government, and with the same hand with which she plucked the fruit she launched upon the world the crimes, the wars, the tumults that have set the universe a-walling.

A terrible offset to all her attractiveness. We are not surprised when we find men and women naturally vulgar going into transgression. We expect that people who live in the ditch shall have the manners of the ditch; but how shocking when we find sin appended to superior education and to the refinements of social life! The accomplishments of Mary Queen of Scots make her patronage of Darnley, the profligate, the more appalling. The genius of Catharine II. of Russia only sets forth in more powerful contrast her unappeasable ambition. The translations from the Greek and the Latin by Elizabeth, and her wonderful qualifications for a queen, make the more disgusting her capriciousness of affection and her hotness of temper. The greatness of Byron's mind makes the more alarming the Byron's sensuality.

Let no one think that refinement of manner or exquisiteness of taste or superiority of education can in any wise apologize for ill-temper, for an oppressive spirit, for unkindness, for any kind of sin. Disobedience Godward and transgression manward can give no excuse. Accomplishment heaven-high is no apology for vice hell-deep.

My subject also impresses me with the regal influence of woman. When I see Eve with this powerful influence over Adam and over the generations that have followed, it suggests to me the great power all women have for good or for evil. I have no sympathy, nor have you, with the hollow flatteries showered upon woman from the platform and the stage. They mean nothing; they are accepted as nothing. Woman's nobility consists in the exercise of a Christian influence; and when I see this powerful influence of Eve upon her husband and upon the whole human race, I make up my mind that the frail arm of woman can strike a blow which will resound through all eternity down among the dungeons or up among the thrones.

Of course, I am not speaking of representative women—of Eve, who ruined

the race by one fruit-picking; of Jael, who drove a spike through the head of Sisera the warrior; of Esther, who overcame royalty; of Abigail, who stopped a host by her own beautiful prowess; of Mary, who nursed the world's savior; of Grandmother Lola, immortalized in her grandson Timothy; of Charlotte Corday, who drove the dagger through the heart of the assassin of her lover; or of Marie Antoinette, who by one look from the balcony of her castle quieted a mob, her own scaffold the throne of forgiveness and womanly courage. I speak not of these extraordinary persons, but of those who, unambitious for political power, as wives and mothers and sisters and daughters, attend to the thousand sweet offices of home.

When at last we come to calculate the forces that decided the destiny of nations, it will be found that the mightiest and grandest influence came from home, where the wife cheered up despondency and fatigue and sorrow by her own sympathy, and the mother trained her child for heaven, starting the little feet on the path to the Celestial City; and the sisters by their gentleness refined the manners of the brother; and the daughters were diligent in their kindness to the aged, throwing wreaths of blessings on the road that leads father and mother down the steep of years. God bless our homes! And may the home on earth be the vestibule of our home in heaven, in which place may we all meet—father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, grandfather and grandmother and grandchild, and the entire group of precious ones, of whom we must say in the words of transporting Charles Wesley:

One family we dwell in him,
One church above, beneath;
Though now divided by the stream—
The narrow stream of death;
One army of the living God,
To his command we bow;
Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now.

LORD NELSON'S KINDNESS.

A Charming Anecdote Showing His Remarkable Human Fellowship.

Capt. Mahan, in his "Life of Nelson," just published, claims the following as an original story showing the inherent kindness of the great sailor. The Fleet letters had just been sent off, when Nelson saw a midshipman come up and speak to Lieut. Pasco, the signal officer, who, upon hearing what was said, stamped his foot in evident vexation and uttered an exclamation. The admiral, of whose nearness Pasco was unaware, called him and asked what was the matter.

"Nothing that need trouble your lordship," was the reply.

"You are not the man to lose your temper for nothing," rejoined Nelson. "What was it?"

"Well, if you must know, my lord, I will tell you. You see that coxswain?" pointing to one of the most exacting of the petty officers. "We have not a better man on board the Victoria, and the message which put me out was this. I was told that he was so busy receiving and getting off the mailbags that he forgot to drop his own letter into one of them, and he has just discovered it in his pocket!"

"Hoist the signal to bring her back," was Nelson's instant command. "Who knows that he may not fall in action tomorrow? His letter shall go with the rest." And the dispatch vessel was brought back for that alone.

The Strangest Dinner.

Perhaps the most remarkable dinner on record was that given by an antiquary named Goebel, in the city of Brussels. At the dinner were apples that ripened more than 1,800 years ago, bread made from wheat grown before the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea, and spread with butter that was made when Elizabeth was Queen of England. The repast was washed down with wine that was old when Columbus was playing with the boys of Genoa. The apples were from an earthen jar taken from the ruins of Pompeii. The wheat was taken from a chamber in one of the pyramids, the butter from a stone shelf in an old well in Scotland, where for several centuries it had lain in an earthen crock in icy water, and the wine was recovered from an old vault in the city of Corinth. There were six guests at the table, and each had a mouthful of the bread and a teaspoonful of the wine, and was permitted to help himself bountifully to the butter, there being several pounds of it. The apple jar held about two-thirds of a gallon. The fruit was sweet and as finely flavored as if it had been preserved but a few months.

In Sweet Simplicity.

Truth in sweet simplicity expresses the thoughts that bind and the words that burn conviction in human understanding, and steadily, with unflinching eye, detects and discloses to the brave spirit that stands by what it believes. One has said that "truth, like light, travels in straight lines"—that it is a divine essence.—Philadelphia Methodist.

Taken from Life.

Manager—I wish to congratulate you. You have managed to draw a picture of absolutely consummate repulsiveness for your villain. Author—Thanks, awfully; but the compliment is due to my better half. It is a description of me by my wife who I refused to buy her a new bonnet.—Tit-Bits.

Metaphorically Speaking.

Skillet—So you traded your old horse for this one, did you? What did you get 'to boot'? Skittle—Myself.—New York Tribune.